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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Russia-Ukraine Energy Tension  
Syria Bush's Iraq Speeches  
PARIS - Tuesday, January 03, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Russia-Ukraine Energy Tension  
Syria  
Bush's Iraq Speeches

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

A large majority of today's headlines are devoted to the Russia-Ukraine tension over gas supplies, which are beginning to also cripple Europe. Popular France Soir headlines "The Energy War Threatens Europe," while Liberation headlines "Energy War: Putin Turns on the Pressure" and adds: "Europe concerned over its dependency on Russia." For editorialist Patrick Sabatier, "Europe is discovering, like Little Red Riding Hood, that Putin is indeed the Big Bad Wolf." Le Figaro titles its front page: "Russian Gas: Putin Causes Difficulties for Europe." For financial La Tribune's editorialist, "it is clear that the conflict is not of a financial nature, this is a political conflict." (See Part C) Former U.S. Ambassador William Ramsay, Co-Chairman of the International Energy Agency, is interviewed in La Croix: "The energy crisis could potentially affect Europe's industry, but individuals will not be affected. This is essentially a political crisis, between Russia and Ukraine." Still, several editorials, including Les Echos, suggest this is a good opportunity for Europe to diversify its energy sources.

Other international news include the latest development in the Hariri investigation and the UN's desire to question Syria's President al-Assad. La Croix analyzes the relationship between Washington and Damascus, at the "expense of Beirut." (See Part C) The political battle in Washington triggered by the eavesdropping controversy is reported in Le Figaro.

La Croix carries an op-ed entitled: "Bush in Nixon's Footsteps." "If you simply replace the word communism in Nixon's speeches by the word terrorism in Bush's speeches, you get pretty much the same type of thought process, unfocused but determined." The author, Pierre de Charentenay, reviews President Bush's recent Iraq speeches. (See Part C)

Popular France Soir devotes a two-page report, announced on its front page, to "Latin America's Challenge to the U.S." Thomas de Rochechouart describes "the emancipation of Latin America, America's former hunting ground." France Soir also interviews journalist and author Maurice Lemoine: "There are two danger zones: Venezuela, where we can expect the U.S. to begin operations of destabilization. and Bolivia. But one of the keys for the rising left will be the elections in Brazil."

On the domestic front, President Chirac's decision to lift the state of emergency, which was implemented November 8 during the suburban violence, is the major domestic story. Many articles are also devoted to a controversial case of euthanasia and the justice system's probable decision not to prosecute the victim's mother and doctor.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Russia-Ukraine Energy Tension

"Negotiate, not Intimidate"

Patrick Sabatier in left-of-center Liberation (01/03): "Europe thought it was done with the Cold War. It is now discovering that the Kremlin can use energy with as much if not more effectiveness as it did nuclear weapons. Like Little Red Riding Hood, Europe is discovering that behind Putin's charm there is a man-eating wolf ready to devour his neighbors. Ukraine bears its own responsibility in the crisis: Russia is simply applying the proven methods of international capitalism. Gazprom-Exxon, it is the same battle. As for Europe, it is learning a lesson. It forgot to define a common energy strategy and to stock enough gas for the winter. Its

dependency on Russian gas is a serious weakness. Modern powers need to define diversified energy policies, both geographically and technologically, in order to ensure their growth. In the immediate future it is also important to remind our 'Russian friend' that in an increasingly inter-dependent world, he, like everyone else, must act responsibly. The time has come to negotiate, not intimidate."

#### "Russian Dolls"

Pascal Aubert in centrist La Tribune (01/03): "Contemporary Russia is undeniably tied to the famous image of the Russian dolls. Like them, Moscow finds its meaning in the intricate ties it has with its former satellites. The disagreement between Moscow and Kiev is more than just a business issue. It is a political confrontation by other means between a dominating nation and its neighbors. The former Soviet nations are prisoners of the economic dependency they have been locked into with the Kremlin. Let us not forget that Gazprom is none other than the former Soviet Ministry of Energy. Putin's Russia is using the economic weapon as it did its military might. Ukraine sinned in wanting to take its distance from the former master. It is now paying the price for its independence. The brutality of the Kremlin's reaction proves, if proof were needed, that the conflict is not of a financial nature: it is a political conflict."

#### "Europe and the Energy Crisis"

Patrick Lamm in right-of-center Les Echos (01/03): "Faced with this 'gas crisis' Europe must adopt a united front. This is not such an easy task, considering that every European nation has a different energy situation, some more dependent than others on Russia's stocks. In the long run, Europe will need to diversify its energy sources. First geographically, turning to Latin America, North Africa, Norway and the Middle East. Second, through the development of new energies, such as nuclear energies."

#### Syria

##### "Al-Assad Wanted for Questioning"

Jean-Pierre Perrin in left-of-center Liberation (01/03): "For the first time since the assassination of Hariri, Al-Assad's regime appears to have been hit below the belt. What is striking in the new offensive by Khaddam is the timing. All observers have noted that in the past few weeks Syria had been acting triumphant, looking as if it could deal with the international pressure. The Syrian opposition itself seemed to be losing its footing and looked divided. For the first time, the accusations are coming from within. In Lebanon, Khaddam's declarations were particularly well received. Among other things, they weaken the allies of Damascus, Hezbollah."

##### "Beirut Afraid to Pay the Price of a Washington Damascus Agreement"

Agnes Rotivel in Catholic La Croix (01/03): "If the Damascus regime can help to stabilize the situation in Iraq, it hopes, in return, to have to pay only a modest price in case Syria is found to bear responsibility in Hariri's assassination. Damascus could then give up a few individuals, but outside the President's immediate circle. In exchange Damascus expects to be paid back with Lebanon. Syria has yet to accept having been forced out of Lebanon. Particularly because it feels Lebanon was used by the French and the Americans to weaken Syria. The fact is that Lebanon is crucial for Syria: economically, but also politically vis-a-vis Israel. This is why Syria cannot accept an anti-Syrian regime to take hold here. Conversely, this situation is a source of concern for the Lebanese. All the more so because history has taught them to be wary of Washington's turnabouts. In exchange for rallying with the anti-Saddam coalition during the Gulf war, Bush father had given Syria the key to the house of Lebanon, which Assad had immediately invaded, until last April."

#### Bush's Iraq Speeches

##### "Bush in Nixon's Footsteps"

Pierre de Charentenay in Catholic La Croix (01/03): "With five major speeches on Iraq in three weeks, President Bush is putting pressure on U.S. public opinion, because it is beginning to abandon him. The U.S. President has been drafting an apocalyptic picture of terrorism and its designs of turning the world into 'a gigantic battle ground.' He continues to link Al-Qaeda and Iraq, and to mention the attacks of 9/11. But he adds, 'we are not losing.' And speaks of freedom for the Middle East. Violence in Iraq continues and two Americans out of three are increasingly wondering what the Marines are doing there. In order to revamp a damaged image, Bush has been developing a new idea: 'victory.' Despite the absence of a calendar for withdrawal and a precise strategy, the victory he speaks of is supposed to launch a new dynamic. This rhetoric of war and victory reminds one of Nixon's own rhetoric. Iraq is not Vietnam. But the sequence of events is similar. And today, like yesterday, all those who criticize the war are labeled defeatists. The sequence of the Bush and Nixon speeches is also striking: if you replace the word communism with the word terrorism, one can see that the reasoning is the

same. The speeches are aimed to improve public opinion. But the repetition of the same rhetoric is beginning to lose ground because things aren't moving and words are becoming suspect. No one wants a Vietnam style defeat. But if the war in Iraq continues with the same dynamics, the perspective for America is not great." STAPLETON